# RETURN OF CREW HELD REHEARSAL

## Talks May Trigger Release of War Captives

By BARRY KRAMER

SAN DIEGO, Calif. (AP — The return of the 82 crewmen of the USS Pueblo is providing a rehearsal at the giant U.S. naval hospital here for the care of Navy servicemen who may be released from captivity in Vietnam.

The Paris peace negotiation and the release by North Korea of the Pueblo crew have raised hopes for an eventual release of Americans held by the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese. There are, however, no indications this may come soon.

A Navy spokesman said Thursday the naval hospital "has been designated as a primary evacuation facility for Navy prisoners of war." This means, he said, that the sprawling hospital complex would be the place where released Vietnam war prisoners spend their first days back in the United States, undergoing extensive medical testing and treatment.

A Navy brochure describes the facility as the largest military hospital in the world. It contains more than 1,500 inpatient beds and several outpatient clinics.

By being on the West Coast, it is among the closest to Vietnam. And giant C141 Skylifter jet transports—the same ones that brought the Pueblo crewmen home from Korea—can land at nearby Miramar Naval Air Station.

At last report, 336 U.S. servicemen were listed as captured or interned in the Vietnam war, most of them Navy, Marine and Air Force pilots downed over North Vietnam since early 1965. But the Pentagon acknowledges that it does not really know how many Americans are prisoners of the North.

International Red Cross requests to visit the captives have been denied by Hanoi. North Vietnam has not provided a list of the Americans it holds.

The Pentagon considers that of the 876 servicemen in Vietnam listed as missing in action, "a considerable number have been captured."

Like the Pueblo crewmen, Navy men released in Vietnam would go first to a hospital in the Far East for immediate medical treatment until they are ready to fly home. In the case of the Pueblo crew, that took only 24 hours.